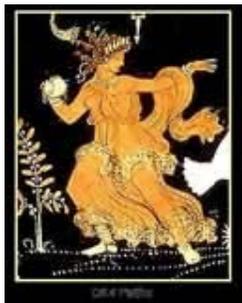


# Peitho

## Newsletter of the Coalition of Women Scholars in the History of Rhetoric and Composition

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Campus Writing Coordinator  
University of California, Irvine, CA 92612  
sjarratt@uci.edu

Susan Romano  
Department of English  
University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, NM 87131  
[sromano@unm.edu](mailto:sromano@unm.edu)

Please contact either of us with questions, ideas, suggestions for books to be reviewed, notice of awards and honors, calls for papers, conference announcements, or any other news of interest to Coalition members.

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### Greetings from the Editors

This issue of *Peitho* marks a point of transition. Kay Halasek, who has been co-editor with Susan Jarratt since the inception of the newsletter in 1996, is stepping down because of new administrative duties at Ohio State. We appreciate her leadership and energy during these formative years in giving shape to the project, establishing the format, soliciting articles, and arranging for excellent graduate student assistance in lay-out and production. The Coalition likewise owes a debt of gratitude to Tara Pauliny for expertly managing desk-top publishing duties for a number of years.

Susan Romano, a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and currently on the faculty at University of New Mexico, has graciously agreed to become the new co-editor. Her areas of research are colonial Mexican rhetorics, and women and technology. She has already begun to arrange for the refurbishing of our website (currently at <http://academic.mu.edu/cwshrc/>, but watch for the new address coming soon) and has generated a plan for a new series (see below).

A time of change offers the opportunity to take stock. Over the six years of our existence, we've published eight issues featuring original historical research, book reviews, and accounts of Coalition panel presentations. *Peitho* has become a place to showcase historical work-in-progress about and by women in rhetoric and composition—the primary goal of the Coalition. The appearance of graduate student authors in each issue meets the second of the Coalition's original aims: extending support to newer members of the profession. We enter the next phase of publication with new resources and resolve. The Coalition, on firm financial footing with almost 300 dues-paying members, will now be supporting the publication of the journal, including salaries for student help in layout and web redesign and maintenance. This means that we will be able to put past issues on-line and hope to begin simultaneous print and electronic distribution by next spring. Although we had always intended the newsletter to be a semi-annual affair, busy schedules, distant collaboration, and life as we know it often intervened to lengthen the time between issues. Beginning with Fall 2002 (volume 7), *Peitho* will appear twice a year, in fall (in time for NCA) and spring (to arrive before 4Cs). In up-coming issues, look forward to an inaugural piece from our new editor on 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish nuns, essays on Ida Tarbell and Renaissance women's civic discourse, and reviews of new books by Nan Johnson and Elizabeth Flynn.

Finally, we are excited to announce a new feature: an on-going primer on archival research where senior scholars extend advice on locating, assembling, and working with sources in their particular areas of expertise. We hope this series will anchor our mentoring activities in the practicalities of scholarly work.

**Challenging Nineteenth-Century Feminization Narratives:  
Mary Yost of Vassar College:**

Suzanne Bordelon, University of Alaska Fairbanks

In *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, Robert Connors resists nineteenth-century “Decline and Fall” narratives by illustrating the complexity and significance of this often overlooked period. Although Connors frequently presents a rich and textured view of nineteenth-century rhetoric, some aspects of his argument could benefit from an even deeper level of analysis. In my discussion, I will present a counter example to his claim that with the entrance of women into higher education, the teaching of rhetoric became feminized in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Connors contends that during this period, rhetoric became “less contestive and more interiorized, even personalized” (66). To support his analysis, he quotes Vassar College’s original stance on debate that “no encouragement would be given to oratory and debate” (qtd. in Connors 53-54) (*Vassar Prospectus* 1865). Connors later concludes that “[a]rgument and debate could not be major parts of a women’s course, and oral thrust and parry was out of the question” (54). It is true that Vassar College’s approach to argumentation may have been more feminine and cooperative and thus less masculine and agonistic than the approach used at male universities during this period. However, this claim ignores the social nature of Vassar’s model of argumentation, the debating activities that did occur at the college, and the attempts by members of its faculty to theorize innovative approaches to argumentation. Vassar’s approach was not interiorized nor personalized; instead it emphasized the broader needs of the community and social consciousness.

In my analysis, I hope to provide a different interpretation of late nineteenth-century rhetoric by examining the work of Mary Yost, who taught English at Vassar College during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Yost theorized a new approach to argumentation, one that challenged the traditional emphasis on formal logic and instead focused on communication among social groups. Herman Cohen emphasizes that Yost was one of the first to approach communication from contemporary sociology and psychology, breaking from “the traditional logic-based model of communication” (69). Similar to Gertrude Buck, whom she worked with and studied under at Vassar, Yost developed a more cooperative, democratic approach to argumentation and debate. Yost challenged the traditional claims of the domestic sphere by encouraging Vassar women to take a more active and public role in society. To complete my analysis, I will focus on Yost’s teaching of argumentation and debate at Vassar College and on her article, “Argument from the Point-of-View of Sociology,” published in 1917 in *The Quarterly Journal of Public Speaking*.

Yost, who lived from 1881 to 1954, is a rhetorician who easily could be added to the growing list of women who have made contributions to the history of rhetoric. In debating activities at Vassar College, Yost encouraged Vassar women to become effective public speakers in a democratic society. Similarly, in her article on argumentation, Yost challenged the dominant approach, contending that argumentation should be viewed in a new way, from the perspective of sociology. Yost’s focus is significant when examined in terms of other turn-of-the-century argumentation textbooks. Yost’s contemporaries typically approached argumentation from the perspective of formal logic. However, in her article, Yost asks us to view argument from a fresh perspective, one that may challenge us to rethink the way that we approach argumentation in our classrooms today.

To better understand Yost’s approach to argumentation, it is helpful to know more about her educational background. A student of Gertrude Buck and Fred Newton Scott, Yost received her bachelor’s degree in 1904 and her master’s degree in 1912 from Vassar College. In 1917, she received her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Michigan (Cohen 66). Yost served as an English instructor at Vassar from 1907-13. She became a fellow in rhetoric at the University of Michigan from 1913-1914, studying with Scott. After completing her fellowship, she returned to Vassar and worked as an assistant professor of English from 1915-1921. In 1921, Yost became the Dean of Women and Associate Professor of English at Stanford University, a position she held until her retirement in 1946. In 1954, Yost died of a heart attack at age 72 (“Doctor Mary Yost” 1).

A key idea underlying Yost’s approach to argumentation is her social view of language. Gertrude Buck had similar ideas that were based on an organic concept of society, which emphasized a reciprocal relationship between the social and the individual. A student of John Dewey and Fred Newton Scott at the University of Michigan, Buck viewed education as a way of bringing about an organic society. Thus, a common theme in Buck’s work is a democratic spirit aimed at broader integration of the social classes through breaking down dualisms and traditional hierarchies. This social view of discourse also is central to Yost’s approach to argument.

During her twelve years at Vassar, Yost frequently taught a two-semester elective course on argumentation, which

emphasized writing, criticism, and oral debate. According to the 1911 English Department Report, the textbooks used in the course included Gertrude Buck's *A Course in Argumentative Writing* (1899), Gertrude Buck and Kristine Manu's *A Handbook for Argument and Oral Debate* (1906), William Trufant Foster's *Argumentation and Debating* (1908), George Pierce Baker's *Specimens of Argumentation* (1893), and the *Lincoln-Douglas Debates*. In addition, students drew on daily newspapers and periodicals for reference and "illustration work."

As part of the course requirements, students wrote ten papers each semester, which included everything from short arguments to lengthier briefs. The course also featured informal and formal debates, with topics drawn from college and broader social issues. Here is a sampling of subjects: "That the membership in debating societies should be voluntary"; "That men and women should have equal suffrage"; "That high license rather than state prohibition is the better solution of the liquor problem"; and "That the present immigration laws be amended by the addition of an educational test" (1911 Department Report). In examining the course requirements and debate topics, we can see that contrary to Connors' claim, argumentation and debate were, in fact, a significant part of a "woman's course." We also can see that Vassar's approach to argumentation encouraged women to become effective speakers on issues of public concern.

This public or communal emphasis also is evident in Yost's article, in which she contends that argument should be viewed from the perspective of sociology. Before discussing her approach, Yost outlines two contemporary developments in argumentation. The first includes an emphasis on "the practical rather than the theoretical side of argumentation" (109). Yost attributes this development to George Pierce Baker's *Principles of Argumentation*, published in 1895. In his Preface, Baker states that there is an "argumentation of everyday life, the principles of which every intelligent man should understand" (vi). Baker was a key theorist in argumentation during the early part of the twentieth century, and his book was highly influential. Yost contends that since the publication of Baker's book, more textbooks have devoted space to selecting debate subjects of interest to students and less to the study of definitions and principles.

Another development has been for a few authors to question the value of the traditional theory of argument. The generally accepted approach was based on faculty psychology, which Yost contends does not reflect how the mind actually works. One obvious example is the distinction many textbooks typically made between the terms conviction and persuasion. (Some textbooks today still emphasize this distinction.) Yost explains that "conviction" is typically defined as "an appeal to the reason, persuasion, an appeal to the emotion" (110). The two terms are defined as if they are completely distinct and separate concepts. Yost emphasizes that these definitions were developed "when the belief held sway that the mind was divided into three compartments, the reason, the emotions, the will—roughly the assumptions of the old faculty psychology" (111). However, she contends that contemporary developments in psychology have called this model into question. Instead, Yost says this concept has been displaced by a view of the mind "as an organic unit performing a particular function—reasoning, feeling, willing—as may be demanded by the situation the individual is meeting" (111).

According to Yost, those authors challenging the traditional approach to argumentation include James Albert Winans and Gertrude Buck. She claims that Winans' *Public Speaking* (1918) questions the faculty psychology in which contemporary approaches to persuasion are based and instead approaches persuasion from the perspective of functional psychology and attention. Gertrude Buck's *A Course in Argumentative Writing* (1899) approaches argumentation inductively from experience and practice rather than deductively from principles of formal logic. Yost says Buck's approach "puts new life into the part logic plays in argument" (111). However, she says both textbooks consider only limited aspects of argument and not the entire field itself.

In her article, Yost moves beyond the scope of those previous texts to reconsider the whole field of argument. As noted, contemporary textbooks tended to approach argumentation in terms of formal logic. According to Yost, this perspective is to be expected "since the principles of argument were first given scientific expression by Aristotle in terms of logic, and the Aristotelian tradition in all rhetorical matters has been little questioned by modern rhetoricians" (112). However, Yost states that argument "as we read and hear and use it every day is directly and fundamentally communication between members of a social group [ . . . ]" (113). Thus, Yost contends that argumentation should be studied in relation to the social group from which it emerges. Studying argument from this perspective would include a search for "characteristics of the typical social group in which argument arises," for the "effects which argument as an act of communication has on both members of the social group [ . . . ]," and for "characteristic stages in the process of the act of communication by which these effects are produced" (113). Such an approach would not negate a logical analysis. Instead, Yost contends that it would lead to a "fuller, more organic theory of argument than is current now" (113). In addition, such an approach would mean that terms like conviction and persuasion, which are based in an out-dated psychology, could be avoided.

A key reason Yost advocates approaching argumentation from sociology is to provide a communal justification for

ethical behavior. According to Yost, a significant development in rhetorical history in the last twenty years "has been the reappearance of Plato's idea of discourse and its warm advocacy by the best modern rhetoricians" (120). Prior to this development, Yost contends, a sophistic approach had dominated and "to it may be traced much of the artificiality and insincerity of 'oratory' " (120). One problem with the Platonic approach is that it has no grounding, except "what may be called the moral one" (120). However, Yost argues that this grounding can be found in a basic assumption underlying social organizations, which she says is "now advanced by many if not all the leading sociologists" (121). This grounding, according to Yost, "is that the organization of the group when it is functioning normally is based on the principle of cooperation between the members for the mutual furthering of individual and therefore group interests" (120). Thus, the aim of argumentation is to further social cooperation.

Yost believes that such an approach has two important implications concerning the teaching of argumentation. First, Yost contends, it emphasizes the functional significance of argumentation, which often is ignored in theories of argument based on logic. However, when argumentation is viewed primarily as communication, the formal aspects seem less significant and rigid than the logical approach suggests. Yost's approach means that form will follow function. As Yost points out, the student will find out that "he is sometimes using narrative to accomplish his purpose, sometimes description, sometimes explanation" (123). Yost's statement is innovative when considered within its context. From 1895 through the mid-1930s, the modes of discourse, which typically classified writing into narration, description, exposition, and argument, were the dominant pedagogical approaches in writing courses (Connors 210, 226). Thus, teachers and students typically approached writing in terms of formal requirements instead of communication.

A second key implication for teaching is in terms of audience. Yost says that in contemporary textbooks, audience often is not discussed "until we reach a short chapter near the end with the caption Persuasion" (121). Yost's statement seems true, for example, when examining George Pierce Baker's *Principles of Argumentation* (1895). Baker's chapter on "Persuasion" is second to the last chapter in the book, and it is here where he specifically discusses audience. Yost contends that audience should be introduced from the beginning of a course in argumentation.

The student must be trained to see that every argument arises from the need of some social situation in which there are two active participants, the speaker and the audience. Therefore, instead of studying the phrasing of propositions first, the student should be set to analyzing his everyday experience, then short newspaper controversies, in order to discover under what conditions argument, as he had understood the term, arises. The active part the audience plays in this situation is impressed upon him and through experience he learns that the more clearly he can enter into the thought and feeling of his audience, the more clearly defined become the real points at issue. (121)

Yost emphasizes that students typically approach argumentation in terms of phrasing propositions and outlining briefs. Consequently, the role of the audience often is pushed to the background. Yost contends, though, that the analysis and study of the topic should be viewed as "a preparation for the argument, not as a step in its process" (122). Only by clarifying their ideas and studying the topic will students be able to effectively communicate with the audience. This focus on audience also is important in terms of drafting briefs. Yost views brief drafting as a heuristic process that allows students to test out their ideas, not just to outline their arguments. More importantly, Yost contends that an emphasis on audience will make students aware of the ethical implications of their arguments. This awareness happens because students see that the "normal action of the social group is cooperation, and this cannot be furthered when the speaker or writer communicates false ideas either through ignorance or intent to deceive" (123). Yost's ideas are similar to Gertrude Buck's, who believed that the interest of both the speaker and hearer were "equally furthered by legitimate discourse" (171). Yost's emphasis on cooperation as the normal functioning of the group encourages the speaker to have a broader social consciousness. The speaker must respond to the larger needs of the group, not just his or her individual needs. By teaching such an approach, Yost encouraged Vassar women to have a keener sense of social responsibility and to act in a way that promoted equality and cooperation.

Yost's view of argumentation and its important social function seems to have been an idea her students supported. For instance, a student editorial entitled "Socialized Speech" in the 1909 *Vassar Miscellany* argues that "[w]e need to realize that our habits of speech are powerful forces in the furthering or retarding of that community of understanding to which we look as the necessary basis of all social progress" (335). Thus, following Yost, the student acknowledges that the goal is to benefit the broader community. The article's conclusion echoes Yost's words:

The way to socialize our speech, to precisely adapt it to the listener while completely expressing ourselves, lies neither in oversensitiveness to others' opinion, nor in overconsciousness of our own, but in the concentration on the idea itself. If we think our own thoughts through, we shall see them in all their relations to the thoughts

of others, in all their possibilities of intimate, convincing expression. If we can learn,—and it lies within the power of every one of us, to say precisely what we see, we shall be on the way toward making our speech social, that is, *communication*. (author's italics) (335)

From this passage, it appears that Yost was working out her social approach to argumentation within the classroom setting. Based on this student editorial, it also seems to be an approach that Vassar women internalized and were applying in their own lives.

In exploring Mary Yost's approach to argumentation, I have emphasized the social significance of her ideas. In so doing, I have tried to show a counter example to Connor's claim that with the entrance of women into higher education, the teaching of rhetoric became feminized and interiorized in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Yost theorized a new approach to argumentation, one that challenged the traditional emphasis on formal logic and instead focused on communication among social groups. In this way, Yost was able to theorize an approach to argumentation consistent with a democracy and the principles of cooperation and equality. These values are evident in her belief that cooperation reflects the normal action of a social group. Since she views the individual and the social in a reciprocal relationship, Yost contends that communication must benefit both. With her social approach to argumentation, Yost helped to prepare Vassar women for public roles, encouraging them to break away from the traditional family sphere and to focus on the larger community and social responsibilities.

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**Congratulations to the new officers for 2002-03!**  
 President – Joyce Middleton, St. John Fisher College  
 Vice President – Kate Adams, University of New Orleans  
 Treasurer – Lynée Gaillet, Georgia State University

Review: "The Pedagogical Legacy Left To Us": Susan Kates' *Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education. 1885-1937*.

Connie Kendall, Miami University (Ohio)

The simple fact is that if we do not have a sense of the ways in which some of our present concerns have been addressed or ignored in the past, the solutions we attempt to generate will suffer as a result of our failure to attend to the educational treatises, curricula, and educational policy generated in other times.  
Susan Kates

Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.  
George Santayana (1863-1952)

I begin this review of Susan Kates' historical study by drawing attention to its organizing premise as expressed in the quotation above. Plainly put, Kates believes that knowing our history is a good thing, an important thing, an ethical thing. And, in light of American philosopher and poet George Santayana's oft-quoted phrase that follows, it is clear that Kates is not alone in her belief: In fact, the similarity between the two quotations is striking with regard to their authors' shared perspective on the ineluctable interconnectedness between the past and the future. For both writers emphatically assert the significance of our knowledge of the past in direct relation to the future consequences wrought by our ignorance of it. Certainly, there is a warning here, and Kates situates her study of the history of activist rhetoric educators steadfastly within its bi-directional focus. In order to fully understand the "pedagogical legacy left to us" (26) then, we must become more like the mythical Janus, guardian of beginnings and endings, simultaneously looking forward and backward.

As a college composition teacher and a graduate student of the history of rhetoric, I am greatly persuaded by Kates' guiding assertion that we need to know our pedagogical history so that we might successfully navigate the future of what she calls "activist rhetoric instruction" (2). That said, it seems equally important for me to interrogate the politics of such an alliance with Kates. While her stance appears to me to be a most ethical and socially responsible approach to the study of our common professional history, it is not without its own set of political assumptions. Asserting that we need to know our pedagogical history turns on at least two implicit claims: (1) that our pedagogical history is, in fact, knowable (i.e., that there are reliable written and/or oral sources of this history and that ethical interpretations of these sources exist) and, (2) that gaining such knowledge is somehow beneficial—individually and communally, personally and professionally. Thus, in order for her argument to be effective, Kates must also persuade her readers of the veracity of the less visible claims implied by her standpoint.

*Activist Rhetorics and American Higher Education. 1885-1937* is organized into five chapters. The introductory chapter, aptly titled "Educational Politics: Rhetorical Instruction and the Disenfranchised Student," constructs the conceptual framework for Kates' argument. She situates her study of five activist rhetoric educators—Mary Augusta Jordan of Smith College; Hallie Quinn Brown of Wilberforce University; Josephine Colby, Helen Norton, and Louis Budenz of Brookwood Labor College—within the sociopolitical milieu of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Her central claim is that these five educators are not only notable for their individual contributions to the history of rhetorical education, but are also, and more importantly, politically and ideologically linked with regard to their pedagogical interests in the education of disenfranchised student populations at the turn of the century.

Kates describes these disenfranchised student populations as those students who "often faced particular kinds of discrimination in the larger culture and were the victims of intelligence prejudice perpetuated by physicians and scientists who argued that white women, African-Americans, and workers were not suited for academic work in colleges and universities" (2). Thus very early in her book Kates circumscribes the boundaries of her study with regard to three specific communities of students—white (middle class) women, African-Americans, and the working class—and then selects rhetoric educators whose work represents the sort of activist pedagogies intended to mitigate and ultimately eradicate the discriminatory effects experienced by these students both inside and outside of the academy. Each of the five educators taught in openly separatist institutions, and it is within these non-mainstream colleges and universities that each devised and promoted rhetoric curricula that were politically informed by the gender, race, and class concerns historically ignored by traditional institutions of higher education.

Once she has connected the teaching practices of Jordan, Brown, Colby, Norton and Budenz through their shared ideological investment in the education of marginalized students, Kates then embarks on a painstakingly researched exploration of each instructors' individual contributions. Aware that the particular historical and social exigencies which shaped these turn-of-the-century educators' pedagogical practices inevitably set their curricular choices in a markedly different context than the instructional choices made by today's college composition teachers, Kates nevertheless maintains the relevance of historical recovery for current educators.

She writes: "Such 'examples' are not models or blueprints. Rather, they are instances of local responses to conditions that are both local and global. They teach us that activist education and, specifically, activist rhetorical study has a long history in the United States" (13). Her logic is sound. And, in light of myriad and often highly contested contemporary debates surrounding the issue of what we now call "multicultural education," Kates' insistence that we look to the past as we teach to the future is a compelling approach aimed at resolving arguably long-standing institutional biases based in gender, race, and class prejudice.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, Kates' examination of the pedagogical legacy of these five educators is consistently organized around the definition of what she terms "activist rhetoric instruction." For Kates, the three key pedagogical features of activist rhetoric instruction include: (1) a profound respect for and awareness of the relationship between language and identity and a desire to integrate this awareness into the curriculum; (2) politicized writing and speaking assignments designed to help students interrogate their marginalized standing in the larger culture in terms of their gender, race, or class; and (3) an emphasis on service and social responsibility (1-2). Space and time constraints obviously preclude a detailed explication of Chapters 2, 3, and 4. Regarding the book's organizational structure, each chapter focuses solely on one of the three marginalized groups identified by Kates early in her text. In Chapter 2, "Gender and Rhetorical Study: The Pedagogical Legacy of Mary Augusta Jordan," Kates focuses her discussion on the implicit feminism of Jordan's rhetoric courses at Smith College and the "indirect feminist critique [. . .] of the social meanings of language use" (32) visible in Jordan's 1904 textbook, *Correct Writing and Speaking*. Shifting the focus in Chapter 3, "Elocution and African-American Culture: The Pedagogy of Hallie Quinn Brown," Kates argues that significant alterations in elocutionary theory and provocative challenges to a racially-biased literary canon are especially apparent in Brown's 1910 reciter text, *Bits and Odds: A Choice Selection of Recitations*. Finally, in Chapter 4, "Ideology and Rhetorical Instruction: Brookwood Labor College," Kates situates the rhetoric instruction of Josephine Colby, Helen Norton, and Louis Budenz within the specific context of preparing working class students for labor activism. In each of these three chapters, Kates provides ample evidence to suggest that Jordan, Brown, Colby, Norton and Budenz were relentless in their crusade to not only redefine traditional rhetorical instruction around the needs and linguistic integrity of disenfranchised student populations, but also to squarely place the study of language use within a broader social context informed by a politics of difference.

Throughout her text, then, Kates seeks to define the particular social purpose and value of activist rhetorical instruction, namely, that there is an identifiable link between rhetorical training and increased political agency. In other words, Kates is working within a tradition wherein literacy and political power assume a specific relationship. Not surprisingly, Kates regularly relies on Freirean concepts, like critical consciousness and the mediating power of language, throughout her text. In a frequently cited essay, "Literacy in Three Metaphors," Sylvia Scribner describes this kind of Freirean orientation toward literacy instruction as a prime example of the "literacy as power" metaphor. Scribner explains that the "expansion of literacy skills is often viewed as a means for poor and politically powerless groups to claim their place in the world" (75). Given Kates' standpoint on the social and political benefits of activist rhetoric instruction for the marginalized students in her study, it is fair to say that her text implicitly supports the "literacy as power" metaphor as defined by Scribner.

The "literacy as power" metaphor is certainly an attractive one for teachers of rhetoric and composition, myself included. It is, at its very core, a hopeful metaphor, one that appeals to a larger philosophical rationale wherein the daily work in rhetoric classrooms is understood as not only necessary for certain traditionally disenfranchised communities, but also as an ethical, democratic, and activist endeavor intended to transform social reality. But, the "literacy as power" metaphor is, of course, much more than a neutral philosophical perspective regarding the value of what we do when we teach reading and writing. The belief that literacy training is a form of empowerment is also a political position that holds a particular set of potentially problematic implications for educational policies and goals.

The most problematic implications derive, of course, from the underlying sense of the metaphor itself. If literacy is power, then whose notion of "literacy" should be institutionally authorized? If we believe that literacy is power, is the converse also believable, that the "non-literate" is ipso facto powerless? How do we define "power" and can we measure the attainment of it? And, maybe most importantly, to what extent are our beliefs about the benefits of literacy shared across cultures, classes, races, generations, and a multitude of other social and political locations? In other words, the relationship between literacy and power, especially when set within the broader institutional context of higher educational reform, is not at all clear.

To Kates' credit, she does address some of these questions in Chapter 5, "Borderlands, Intersections, and Ongoing History: Rhetoric and Activism in Higher Education." One of the inherent difficulties in defining a relationship between the acquisition of a certain kind of literacy and a marginalized population's increased political agency is that notions of "difference" or "otherness" can become relatively fixed in arguably unproductive ways. As mentioned before, the organizing structure of Kates' book demands that she present a fairly narrow conceptualization of "the disenfranchised student"—either the white (middle class) female students of

Chapter 2, the African-American students of Chapter 3, or the working class students of Chapter 4. While Kates' choice to focus solely on one of the three marginalized student populations in each of the three inner chapters undoubtedly strengthens her argument regarding the activist nature of the five educators' revised rhetoric curricula, her choice simultaneously reinforces the more problematic conceptualization that these students comprised relatively homogeneous communities. Chapter 5 is Kates' attempt at complicating this standpoint by invoking the recent Borderlands theory found in Gloria Anzaldua's *Borderlands: La Frontera* and Henry Giroux's *Border Crossing: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*.

However compelling Kates' use of Borderlands theory is, she comes to it quite late in her book. If there is a "weakest link" in Kates' general argument, it exists only in the final eight pages of Chapter 5. Ironically, her relatively less convincing final discussion of Borderlands pedagogy is, I believe, a direct result of the book's more convincing organizational structure which emphasizes the openly separatist interests of the five educators' pedagogy, their students and their institutions. Kates writes: "[. . .] despite the apparent homogeneity of these student constituencies, the academic communities at these institutions, as well as those outside of them (for many pedagogical materials were aimed at the citizen outside the university), were not unified" (126). Kates' decision to conclude her study with a focused, but ultimately too brief, discussion of the contradictions and tensions that existed within each student population at the three institutional sites does little to dislodge the strict organizing structure present throughout the text. And as a reader, I was left wondering about the extent to which the activist rhetoric instruction of Jordan, Brown, Colby, Norton and Budenz is transferable to the mainstream colleges and universities that generally populate this nation.

But then again, maybe this felt sense of cognitive dissonance is exactly the sort of uneasy incompleteness Kates means to create. Recognizing that we can only speculate as to the success of activist rhetorics for contemporary students in traditional institutions, Kates remarks that "an activist pedagogy does not in and of itself ensure political action. As Giroux points out, critical literacy does not equate itself with freedom but with the dialogue that makes freedom possible" (128). With regard to providing a thought-provoking and meticulously researched study intended to advance such a dialogue of possibility, Kates' book certainly earns its keep.

#### Works Cited

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